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Sustainable development goals (SDGs), leadership, and Sadhguru: SELF-TRANSFORMATION becoming the aim of leadership development

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A B S T R A C T

The context of the SDGs resembles the properties of a complex adaptive system (CAS). CAS requires a specific form of leadership and leaders capable of creating social movements and via that way inducing large-scale system transformation towards the attainment of SDGs. Leaders capable of creating social movements tend to be those who occupy the highest levels of adult development (also referred as orders of consciousness). In this paper, we study the leadership approach towards the attainment of SDGs of leader, humanist and mystic from India Jaggi Vasudev Sadhguru. We have chosen him because he has initiated several social movements that have already created effects specified by SDGs. We study his approach to leadership by applying Kegan's (1994) framework of meaning-making and subject-object theory for the 5th order of consciousness. After analyzing Sadhguru's approach from that perspective, we discuss how leadership development programs should be re-designed to produce more leaders of Sadhguru's type. We contribute to the gap between adult development and leadership development if the aim is to facilitate the vertical development of participants towards the highest order of consciousness which in effect will be more capable of attaining SDGs.

1. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target the positive change in socio-economic-natural systems on a global level. They aim towards the reduction of poverty; the protection of natural resources and the planetary atmosphere; gender equality and human rights; the improved quality of living; the spread of peace; and other indicators of planetary and humanistic well-being across the globe. They were adopted by all United Nations Member States in, 2015. Altogether, there are 17 Sustainable Development Goals disassembled in 169 targets.[1]

Towards that aims there is a need for co-coordinated actions across industrial corporations, governmental bodies, educational institutions, NGOs, and international bodies like IMF, WB, UN. The question is, who is more likely to create such coordinated actions – inspired leaders or properly designed and congruent regulations and policies implemented on international, regional, and national levels? The proper answer is both, but in this paper, we focus on how inspired leaders should lead towards the coordinated actions and create social movements that produce the effects specified by SDGs. Specifically, we focus on the case study of Sadhguru, a leader from southern India who presents himself as a yogi, mystic, humanitarian, and leader whose approach to life and leadership has transformed

many lives for the better and has produced many other positive effects specified by the SDGs. Sadhguru is an in-spirited (Steiner, 1999/ 1893) leader that could be classified as a very evolved person from the perspective of the neo-Piagetian constructive school of adult development (Cook-Greuter, 1999; Kegan, 1994). In this paper we claim that the more evolved the leader on the neo-Piagetian developmental framework, the more transformative the leadership style likely is (Rooke & Torbert, 2005) and the greater the likelihood of inducing the effects specified by the SDGs.

In this paper, we explore why leaders that are highly evolved along the neo-Piagetian developmental framework induce more transformative effects than the lesser evolved leaders. To understand that, we first discuss the properties of the context created by SDGs. This is the context where the leadership for the SGDs should emerge. Then we discuss how the SDGs should be viewed from the perspective of leadership effectiveness. Here, we adopt the perspective that aspirations to meet the SDGs impose the highest order cognitive demands on the leader (Kegan, 1994), alongside this perspective we explore the relationship between the orders of consciousness, leadership approaches, and leadership effects. Then, we carry out an in-depth study of Sadhguru's approach to leadership. We have selected the Sadhguru because, first, he has demonstrated effectively the kind of leadership that produces the effects specified by the SDGs; second, he tends to discuss and dissect his approach to leadership in great detail; and third, he likes to disseminate his approach to other leaders in the position of power. We analyze his approach to leadership from the perspective of Kegan's subject-object theory and meaning-making mechanism for the 5th order of consciousness. In the last section, we explore how leadership development programs should be designed in support of the development of leaders capable of implementing SDGs. This last section is discussed in terms of what should be novel assumptions on which such programs should be designed from. Specifically, we also expose how the existing program design assumptions should change to develop leaders capable of meeting SDGs.

The paper contributes to the field of leadership development program design in several ways: (1) it studies the properties of the leadership approach of the 5th order of consciousness from the perspective of Kegan's subject-object theory; (2) on the case of Sadhguru's approach to leadership it illuminates novel properties of the subject-object relationship of the 5th order of consciousness and (3) it discussed how the existing leadership programs designs assumtions should be replaced new assumptions if the aim of such program is the development of leaders for the SDGs.

2. What are the properties of the context in which the leadership for the SDGs is situated?

In this paper, we treat SDGs as indicators of the desired leadership effects. Leadership effects are the effects that can be attributed to a specific leader's decision and action. This attribution is difficult because the leader's effects tend to be distributed over time, spatially distant, and vary in magnitude. We like to justify this perspective in properties of the complex adaptive systems (CAS).

As specified by the UN, SDGs require coordinated action across socio-economic-natural systems on the regional and country-level, across industrial corporations, governmental bodies, educational institutions, NGOs. Since all these systems are interconnected and nested in each other, we should treat them as complex adaptive systems (CAS). What are the behavioral properties of the CAS? Prigogine (1977), Kauffman (1996) and Waldrop (1993) demonstrated several properties of CAS: (1) the inter-relationship, inter-action, and inter-connectivity of the elements within a system, and also between the system and its environment; (2) distributed control – no single centralized control mechanism governs system behavior; (3) coactive change – behavior emerges co-actively from bottom-up and top-down simultaneously; (4) holism – because it depends on relationships and feedback among components, the overall system behavior cannot be explained merely as the sum of individual parts; (5) co-evolution – elements in a system can change based on their interactions with one another and with the environment; (6) indetrminism – outcomes are predictable probabilistically.

CAS behavior also exhibits nonlinear effects like (1) saltatory change (stage-like shifts) – small shifts at tipping points can have a surprisingly profound impact on overall behavior; (2) sensitivity of outcomes on initial conditions; (3) multi-finality – same initial conditional can have multiple clinical outcomes; (4) equi-finality – different initial conditions can lead to the same outcome; and (5) a focus on adaptive variation and local initiative. To sum up, CAS also provides the most inclusive capture of properties of the context in which leadership for the SDGs should emerge.

The logical question then is, what is the role of the leader and leadership in the context of the complex adaptive system (CAS)? The impact of the leader and leadership on the CAS tends to be indirect, established primarily through the organizational (collective) identity, and creation of social movements (Schneider, Somers 2006). The role of the leader is to seed and cultivate the collective identity, and to activate social movements that, through multiple pathways lead to the effects that are specified by the SGDs. The effects also are determined by the initial conditions, which when it comes to a leader and leadership, are determined by the order of consciousness. Two individuals can construct different meanings from an identical event, depending on their respective order of consciousness (Scharmer, 2009). Orders of consciousness are best captured by neo-Piagetian stages of adult development. They denote a distinct way in which people tend to construct their sense of self and attribute meanings to the events (Kegan, 1982, 1994). So which orders of consciousness would most likely produce SDG-specified leadership effects?

3. Which orders of consciousness would most likely produce SDG-specified leadership effects

The neo-Piagetian constructive school of human development studies the properties and patterns in which people tend to construct their sense of self and interpret their experiences. The properties of construction of the sense of self is referred as self-referential system; the properties of interpretations are referred as meaning-making system (Kegan, 1994). The neo-Piagetian constructive school of human development also studies how these properties and patterns evolve over the lifespan. More specifically, the neo-Piagetian scholars have studied different aspects of the human psyche, including the structure of the ego (Hy & Loevinger, 1996; Loevinger, 1976), social cognition (Selman, 1971, 1980), reflective judgment (King & Kitchener, 2004), moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1981), –

meaning-making systems (Kegan, 1982, 1994), cognitive complexity (Commons, Trudeau, Stein, Richards & Krause, 1998), perspective-taking (Cook-Greuter, 1999, 2014), leadership action logics (Rooke & Torbert, 2005; Tolbert & Associates, 2004), needs and motivations (Maslow, 1967; Barret, 2016), and value MEMEs and beliefs (Graves, 1974; Beck & Cowan, 1994/2014).

Regardless of the researched aspect, different neo-Piagetian scholars have come up with similar findings, namely, that people tend to have in common not so much the content of their life experiences, but the structures through which they organize these experiences (Kegan, 1982, 1994). These distinct structures are variously referred to as stages, orders, ways of knowing, levels of development, organizing principles, or orders of development (McCauley et al., 2006). Hereafter, we use Kegan's term 'order of consciousness.' Different scholars have come up with different frameworks for depicting orders of consciousness (Loevinger, 1994, 1976; Cook--Greuter, 1999; 2013; Rooke & Torbert, 2005). In this paper, we adopt the Kegan's framework. We find it particularly useful for the study of the highest order of consciousness because it is focused on the subject-object relationship.

Orders tend to follow the invariant evolutionary sequence, with each successive order transcending an including the previous order (Cook-Greuter, 2013: Wilber, 2001). Because subsequent orders include all earlier structures as special cases, later orders are more complex (they support more comprehensive understanding) than the earlier ones (Realms, 2014). Developmental movement from one order to the next is driven by limitations in the current self-referential system and meaning-making mechanism (Kegan, 1982, 1994). Once the higher order has been constructed, the previous order loses its organizing function but remains as a perspective that can be reflected upon (Cook-Greuter, 2013).

The order influences what the person can notice or can become aware of, and therefore, what one can describe, reflect on, change, and control (Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2009). At the same time, the order also determines what is still left unseen, hidden to conscious awareness, thus making a person controlled by it. This distinction between what the person is aware of and what is left hidden is known as the subject-object relationship. All that is in conscious awareness represents the subject; all that is hidden to conscious awareness constructs the object. The order of consciousness seems to be the core predictor of the leadership approach and leadership effects (McCauley et al., 2006; Scharmer, 2009; Rooke & Torbert, 2005).

Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) proposed that only the leaders operating from at least Kegan's 4th order of consciousness (referred also as a self-authoring mind) are capable of transformative leadership approach that drives larger-scale change in the socio-economic system. Leaders at the previous orders of consciousness (i.e., Kegan's socialized mind and imperial mind) are not capable of adopting transformational leadership due to the limitations of their self-referential system and meaning-making structures. Conversely, leaders operating from the highest, 5th order of consciousness (i.e., Kegan's self-transformational mind) are even more capable of driving large-scale socio-economic system changes due to their superior self-referential system and meaning-making structures (however, the relationship between 5th order and leadership approach was not researched by Kuhnert and Lewis but later by Rooke & Torbert, 2005 research). The Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) paper initiated a stream of research on the relationship between the orders of consciousness, leadership approach, and leadership effectiveness (Lucius & Kuhnert, 1999; Harris & Kuhnert, 2008; Anderson, 2006, 2016).

The majority of research linking orders of consciousness with leadership falls in the domain of the integral approach to leadership. Research in this domain is mostly published by the *Integral Leadership Review* (Fein, 2018; Volckman, 2005, 2012), however this research is still very scarce. The integral approach to leadership is founded on Wilber's all quadrants, all levels (AQAL) model (Walsh, & Wilber, 2010; Wilber, 2001). His model links leader orders of consciousness with leadership behavior, collective identity and organizational change. The greatest research gap in this research domain lies in the highest, 5th order of consciousness. A meta-review of distributions of people across different orders of consciousness showed that less than 1% of leaders operate from the highest order (Kegan, 1994). This is the main reason for the scarcity of research of the highest order of consciousness.

In the book, *In Over Our Heads*, Kegan (1994) illuminates the properties of the subject-object relationship for leaders that occupy the highest, 5th order of consciousness (self-transformational mind). For the 5th order, the definition of the self (Who I am) is incomplete, always forming and re-forming itself. The leader is capable of observing, reflecting, and changing own self-definitions and identifications. The object of observation and reflection for the person operating from the highest, 5th order of consciousness is own self-definitions and identifications with the assumptions and beliefs. Previous orders are not capable of that reflection. In Kegan terms, the object of observation and reflection becomes "self-*as*-form". "Self-*as*-form" was hidden so 4th order of consciousness, it was left unconsciousness; but for the 5th order, it moves from the unconscious to consciousness. Kegan (1994: 321) further suggests that "Refusing to see oneself or other as a single system or form, regarding the premise of completeness as tempting pretense, constructing the process of interacting as prior to the existence of the form or system, facing protracted conflict as likely sign of one's own identification with false assumptions of wholeness, distinctiveness, completeness, or priority – all these ways of constructing reality require that the epistemological organization of system, form, theory be relativized, moved from subject in one's knowing to object in one's knowing. They all require "*trans*-systemic", "multi-form", or "cross-theoretical" epistemological organization. In other words, they all require 5th order of consciousness". What is left subject for the 5th order of consciousness, thus unseen and hidden to conscious awareness, are the relationships a person holds with other people and nature (Kegan, 1994).

Cook-Greuter (1999) researched the perspective-taking of construct-aware adults, which correspond to Kegan's 5th order of consciousness. Construct-aware adults are capable of '5th person perspective-taking.' The core capacities related to the 5th person perspective-taking are: "The linguistic process of splitting into polar opposites (dualism) and the attending value judgments can become conscious as well. Good and evil, life and death, beauty and ugliness may now appear as two sides of the same coin, as mutually necessitating and defining each other." Through reflective observation, "ego becomes transparent to itself"; furthermore, "turning inward and observing one's own mental processes can also lead to the spontaneous discovery of a direct mode of experiencing in which knower and known momentarily merge, and the personal self-sense disappears …" Last but not least, they can easily access "intuition, bodily states, feelings, dreams, archetypal, and other transpersonal material states … experience moments of freedom from the ego's

constant efforts at control and self-affirmation" (Cook-Greuter, 1999: 235).

Using Kegan's subject-object relationship as a framework for the study of highest order leaders, we now turn to the in-depth case study of Indian mystic, leader and humanitarian Jaggi Vasudev Sadhguru.[2] We have selected Sadhguru because he is a successful leader from the perspective of meeting the SDGs. Here are brief descriptions of a few Sadhguru's projects that successfully target SDGs[3]:

1. TREE PLANTING PROJECT: In 2012 Sadhguru has launched a large scale environmental project in Southern India. Their rivers were going dry and groundwater was sinking very rapidly. Sadhguru set a goal of planting 114 Mio trees in Tamil Nadu. He approached the goal in a specific way. He addressed 1000 people and made them sit under the trees. While sitting he set up a yogic process, through which he led them to experience in a profound sense how they are not separated from the trees. He did that through a simple yet powerful breathing exercise, telling them that "what they are breathing, the trees are inhaling, what the trees are exhaling, they are breathing in … So bringing this experience into people that what you think as myself is not within the boundaries of your physical nature; it goes well beyond that … Once they realized that, there was no stopping for planting threes by them … If this (sense of unity) becomes a living reality, they can fulfil these goals that UN has."[4] Sadhguru also insisted that trees being planted on small plots of land, less than half an acre; half of the trees are fruit trees and half of them can be used for firewood so that people who live on these lands can benefit from them and thus they are motivated to take care of them. By this simple project, Sadhguru initiated a movement of planting trees across India. We claim that this movement directly contributes to SDG #1 and SDG#15.
2. RALLY FOR RIVERS is the second movement launched by Sadhguru in September 2017. In 30-day time he gathered 162 Mio supporters for Rally for River initiative. This great support was coming from ordinary people. It caused an activation of the government of India to start doing "right" action to preserve rivers, fertile land, and reduce the poverty among farmers who lived from those land. Sadhguru and the movement have been involved in the redefining of the government policy. One of the first big projects has been done in Vavatmal district, which was known as the suicide capital of India (with 4500 farmers' suicides per year). The suicides were related to the disappearing Vagari river and increasing non-fertile land, huge debts, and farmers' inability to repay. In the effects of the Rally for Rivers movement 54 km of the Vagari river, which covers 285 km2 of the river basin, got a governmental sanctioned project. Farmers received money, also the phone number to call up in times of distress (to provide them with emotional support to prevent suicides) while at the same time changing the landscape by bringing about the horticulture and agroforestry in the region. These actions in effect will greatly augment the farmer's income fast and, in 10-year time, also the Vagari river. This project merged an economy and ecology. Merges of the ecology with an economy became a flagship for the Rally for Rivers project. It got also the support of the United Nations, which in consequence launched a Decade of Water Action 2018–2028. We claim that this movement directly contributes to SDG#1, SDG#2, SDG#3, and SDG#6.
3. TRUTH AND YOUTH: "Youth AND Truth" is the third movement created by Sadhguru aimed to empower the youth in India with the required clarity and perspective and to enable them to realize their full potential. The movement was brought to life on the back of a month-long series of college events across India covering a wide range of educational institutions such as IIM-A, IIT Bombay, JNU, NALSAR University of Law, and others. Mass media and digital amplification accompanied these on-ground student events. A digital platform was created which became a repository of both questions from the youth and Sadhguru's answers. Also, there was a series of informal events in youth-oriented locations. All these events were interactive, candid sessions between Sadhguru and students, where students could seek clarity on any topics they chose, be it a career, parents, addiction, stress, relationships, or sexuality – nothing was off limits! Youth And Truth is then turned into a global movement to inspire and empower youth around the globe. We claim that this movement directly contributes to SDG#3 and SDG#4.

Sadhguru also teaches other leaders to follow his example. For that purpose, he has designed a unique approach to leadership. This approach is analysed by an in-depth case study of Sadhguru's speeches to the business audiences in the next section.

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[2] Sadhguru was named in the top 50 most influential Indian leaders by *India* magazine. He has been a delegate to the United Nations Millennium World Peace Summit, a member of the World Council of Religious and Spiritual Leaders and Alliance for New Humanity, a special invitee to the Australian Leadership Retreat, the Tallberg Forum, the Indian Economic Summit 2005–2008, as well as a regular speaker at the World Economic Forum in Davos, YPO, WPO, TieCON, India Today Conclave, and many more. He is a regular guest at leading educational institutions, including Oxford, the London Business School, IMD, Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Wharton, and MIT, where he prefers to address issues as diverse as socioeconomic development, leadership, and spirituality. The core platform for these many initiatives is the Isha foundation. The Isha Foundation is, in essence, an organization that uses yogic sciences to deliver the programs that create physical, mental, and emotional well-being (also including special programs for executives). Programs have been attended by more than 5 million people around the world. The Isha Foundation alone is a huge management challenge. The organization is operated by a network of 2 million people (volunteers) worldwide.

[3] Yoga means to join, to unite, symbolizing the union of body and consciousness. Yoga balances body and soul, physical health, and mental wellbeing; it promotes harmony between people and between ourselves and the natural world. Recognizing its universal appeal the UN general assembly proclaimed the 21st of June as an international day of yoga. UN broadcast from June 20, 2020, where the United Nations organized a special event on 'Conversation with Yoga Masters - Yoga for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).', the keynote speaker has been Sadhguru.

[4] Sadhguru at the United Nations: Yoga for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RItP32oi85Y&t=2104s.

4. Case study: how does Sadhguru approaches and interprets the leadership?

A case study of Sadhguru applies a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2008). We have gathered secondary sources composed of spoken material, written articles, and published books. Audio material was mainly accessed from YouTube (videos, transcripts, speeches, thinking) and the Sadhguru's Isha Foundation page. We have focused on available audio material from, 2015 to 2018, though the same material is also slightly older and some newer. We have limited the study with a timeframe since new Sadhguru's talks appear daily on YouTube and social platforms in great numbers. Due to this reason, we have also limited the selection of published talks and focused mostly on those presented to the executive audiences at business schools, conferences, business and economic retreats, and economic forums (i.e., at the World Economic Forum, United Nations, etc.).

The chosen audio material totalled to 76 h. All material was listened to comprehensively first. During listening, we took notes to capture the core ideas and messages. We spotted the replication of similar ideas and concepts across the material, and that which captured the replicated ideas and concepts were transcribed. Written transcripts amounted to approximately 100,000 words.

The transcribed pages were reread by two decoders. The decoders composed their list of codes, concepts, and categories, and looked for the most representative quotes illustrating identified concepts. Having the quotes along with the categories was a significant aid in axial coding and the disaggregation of core themes and messages. The core themes unpacked through this process were: (yogic) spiritual process, self-transformation, accumulation, and expansion, identity and personality, inclusiveness, physical and non-physical realm, the sensory body, exuberance, humanity, morality, ambition, and vision.

Two major observations sprang out of the decoding process. First, in his talks, Sadhguru tends to refer to Shankaran Pillai's stories to encapsulate the core messages. Mythical stories are a subtle, yet powerful form of influence of the leader on the followers (Parks, 2005). Furthermore, mythical stories tend to "shapes and sustain our emotional attitudes, provides us with life purpose, energizes our everyday acts. It gives life meaning and momentum." (Houston, 2009, p. 129).

Second, Sadhguru (2016) tends to derive lessons and messages out of his life experiences and not through the ascetic study of scriptures. The name Sadhguru implies an uneducated guru. He has lived a rich life filled with different types of experiences (resisting over-compliance and schooling, living in a jungle, exploring the world on a bike, building the sacred temple Dhyanalinga, etc.). He places yoga and spirituality at the CenterPoint of his life experiences, and his leadership action. He defines spirituality as "the ability to look without a motive … " (Sadhguru, 2016:15). The merger between spirituality and leadership is the property of leaders that operate from the highest stage of adult development (Tolbert, Rooke, 2005).

The core theme Sadhguru likes to address is the human tendency of "wanting more." "Wanting more" is universally expressed in all humans, but this "wanting more" can be expressed in two forms, "wanting more in a material realm" vs. "wanting more in a non-material realm". In "wanting more in a non-material realm," the creative power of humans lie (Sadhguru, 2016). "Wanting more in a non-material realm," should be a driving force behind the leadership actions (and is also the driving force behind his leadership action).

Sadhguru frequently discusses the properties of "wanting more," in executive audiences. "Wanting more is natural to human beings. Whoever you are, you want to be something more than you are right now. If you know only money, you are thinking of more money, if you know wealth, you want more wealth; and if you know knowledge, you want more knowledge. Whatever is your currency, you want more of that currency … If you see this, you know that you are looking for an infinite expansion. . . . So, if you really look at it, what they (human beings) are looking for is not more, they are looking for all … If you … expand in a limitless way, trying to do it physically is a foolish thing. Your desire is fantastic … The method is hopeless … This can only happen if you transcend the limitations of physicality. This is where yoga comes in. Yoga means you learn to erase the boundaries of your physicality."[5]

The problem is that this evolutionary force of "wanting more" is hidden to the conscious awareness of leaders. If it remains hidden, it operates below the level of conscious awareness; then it gets expressed as an unconscious need to accumulate more of personal possessions, power, status, and career progress. Sadhguru does not only discuss only the "wanting more" of material goods and wealth, but also the accumulation of beliefs, past successes, and other experiences around which the sense of self is fixated. This accumulation creates the boundaries of the identity (sense of self). I am what I have accumulated. Identification is with the material goods, wealth, past successes, and other sorts of experiences. Sadhguru is emphasizing that these accumulations should not define who the person is in a real sense. "What we have accumulated and who we are should remain separate. Who I am should not be influenced by what I have accumulated, whether they are material things, information, beliefs, and impressions."[6]

When a person over-identifies with either material possessions and/or past experiences (situated in memory), his/her identity is the constraint. The constraint identity of a leader is particularly problematic because it tends to be expressed as the need for career success, hierarchical power, and social power etc. This is the source of over-ambition. The over-ambitions lead to stress, strain, impulsive thoughts, and improper action, which is a signal that the person does not manage the self; in consequence, such a leader is not capable of managing others towards SDGs. In such a state, any success from doing business is accidental, not controlled. "If you want to manage a thousand people, essentially you are managing a thousand minds. If you want to manage a thousand minds, (and) if you are not even able to manage your own mind, it is going to be accidental management."[7] Accidental management is expressed as competition and forcefulness in everyday business life. "If you forcefully take something, you will never expand with a full capacity."[8]

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[5] Sadhguru: You Don't Exist as an Individual, knowing this experientially. Accessed on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAZvzEWTKfY.
[6] Sadhguru: "The Ideal Education" - Sir Ken Robinson with Sadhguru. Accessed on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAaWZTFRP9Q.
[7] Sadhguru: Leadership Ambition to Vision, Sadhguru speaks at the IMD Laussane. Accessed on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGroxC5xJaA.
[8] Sadhguru: Leadership Ambition to Vision, Sadhguru speaks at the IMD Laussane. Accessed on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGroxC5xJaA.

To propose a solution to this problem, Sadhguru discusses the properties of unconstraint, boundless identity. For Sadhguru, the "limited identity and its underlying tendency of wanting more in a physical realm" should be recognized, observed, and reflected on. "The more one develops his personality,. . . the more and more you identify yourself with certain limited qualities in life. . . . because you have sort of concretized yourself with your likes and dislikes, opinions, ideas, philosophies, whatever … The spiritual process means that you are trying to dissolve all that you have created … When you say I am turning spiritual, you are turning inward, longing to taste, experience, and establish yourself in another dimension of life … As a person becomes spiritual that means he becomes more malleable …. spirituality means you are de-concretizing it (personality) so that it is malleable. You still play around with the personality, but it is not you."[9]

To become capable of practicing leadership that would create effects specified by the SDGs, leaders would need to master this spirituality that allow for constant reshaping of their sense of self, identity, personality. Mastering spirituality for Sadhguru means that one is capable of expanding own sensory body. Here Sadhguru emphasizes the difference between the sensory body and physical body. The expanded sensory body is established by putting oneself into a state of exuberance. "Your boundaries of sensation are not fixed … If you feel very exuberant, the boundaries of sensation got expanded. The sensory body has an existence of its own … (different from the) physical body … "[10]

Operating from the expanded sensory body the identity of a person becomes not only more malleable but also more inclusive. "If you consciously crack up your energy to a certain level of exuberance … your sensory body becomes large … and you can feel others within your sensory body as part of yourself … So, if you are joyful, your sensory body will be all over the place – there would be a deep sense of inclusiveness. Once your experience of life is inclusive, without being elected, you are the leader … When you are truly inclusive, you will naturally have an insight about everything and the right kind of people naturally gather around you."[11]

The next critical insight related to leadership is the idea that "all humans want the same, which is the experience of inner well-being." This should be recognized when the challenge is leading others towards collective good. "The fundamental business of any kind of leadership is human well-being. Everybody's business is human well-being. It is only the scale and scope which is different from person to person. For some, human well-being means only my well-being, and they don't care what happens to somebody. For another, a person's human well-being means him and his family. For another person, human well-being means him and his community. For another person, human well-being means him and his country. For another person, it is the whole world. Only in scale can human beings be different, otherwise every human aspiration is human well-being … So, if you scale is larger than you individual well-being, you are a leader. …"[12]

When insight into human wellbeing comes into a person's conscious experience, which happens when a person operates from the expanded sensory body and malleable, inclusiveness identity, the ideas for moral actions can arise. Moral action for Sadhguru does not comply with the generic notion of morality. "Morality has become an important thing in society because people have forsaken their humanity. If your humanity was alive and active, you would not need morality."[13] Humanity means being sensitive to others by using an enlarged sensory body for making leadership decisions and actions. "So, what is the most sensible thing to do (is) what brings well-being to you and everybody around? This is what one needs to look at constantly."[14]

At the most extreme level, the sensory body (the sense of self) expands so much that all limits to the self completely dissolve, and the person merges with all the existence. Such experience, which is labelled differently by different wisdom traditions (Wilber, 2007), happens frequently to Sadhguru. "In my experience, I do not see myself and somebody else. I just see myself. So this is not even a devotion. This is not even loving. This is just inclusiveness and this is not my idea. This is not my philosophy. This is the way the world is. If you just do not constipate your consciousness by being identified with limited things like your body, your mind, your own culture, your own religion, your own family, your own whatever - if you do not constipate your mind with those kinds of limitations, the existence is all-inclusive."[15]

For Sadhguru, the stronger is the experience of inclusiveness, the greater is the capability to lead change towards SDGs. In the state of the merger of a sensory body with all existence and sense of ultimate inclusiveness, one gets in touch with the Bodhi, the ultimate intelligence that organizes all life into a form, then the life of a leader attains certain magical qualities. Reflecting on such experience, Sadhguru infers that here lies the real capability of truly transformational leadership on a larger social-natural system scale. "As I began consciously touching that intelligence, which is the source of creation, seemingly inexplicable events started occurring to me. Things that I touched were transformed in some way or another … This ability to transform any external and internal reality quite dramatically has continued within and around me to this very day." (Sadhguru, 2916: 20). Sadhguru also emphasizes that he is being no different than any other human being. All humans carry the same power. "In every human body, there is an intelligence, a competence, which is capable of transforming a piece of bread, egg, banana into a human body … This is a hidden intelligence, competence. If only you would find access to this intelligence. Even if that would be a drop of this intelligence, you would live

⁹ Sadhguru: What is personality? Accessed on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=deC_ROdaJFE.
¹⁰ Sadhguru: Leadership beyond a Leader. Accessed on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4eWutr6-vo.
¹¹ Leadership beyond the Leader. Accessed on:www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAlgZmK0HVk.
¹² Sadhguru: Leadership beyond a leader. Accessed on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4eWutr6-vo.
¹³ Sadhguru: Humanity, Yes! Morality, No! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Mo1cUvwR3s.
¹⁴ Sadhguru: Humanity, Yes! Morality, No! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Mo1cUvwR3s.
¹⁵ Sadhguru – There's Nobody Else in this Existence, It's Just Me. Accessed on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnSJR5PXuA0.

magically."[16]

Sadhguru's approach to leadership corresponds to but also advances Kegan's notion of the leadership of the 5th order of consciousness (also referred as self-transforming mind). First, self-transformative leaders, who operate from Kegan's 5th order of consciousness, tend to identify the self with the process of form creation; object becomes "self-*as*-form", subject remains the relationships that "self-*as*-form" forms with others. Kegan's self-transformative leaders tend to see self-*as*-form being incomplete. Also Sadhguru's core idea is that personality is malleable, non-fixed, changeable, and incomplete, but for Sadhguru all relationships with which one identifies with becoming a part of the objective self on which one can reflect upon. Thus, here Sadhguru extends Kegan in a sense that the relationships with which one identifies with are not anymore the subject (unobservable to the self as in Kegan's notion of the 5th order of consciousness) but instead become an object of observation (can be reflected upon). In the extreme, relationships with all existence become a part of the self and an object of inner observation.

Second, Kegan studies human relations in the material realm, but Sadhguru draws attention to non-material plane of existence. This can be entered through the expanded sensory body and complete dissolution of personality, identity. The object of observation becomes all material realm where Kegan's self-*as*-form and relationships get constructed. The object in Sadhguru's become "self-*as*-unity with many forms of the self". For Sadhguru, the measure of unity with many forms can be of different scales (family, organization, nation, planet). If the object is the "self-*as*-unity" with a group, the leader forms the inclusive identity in this group; the group members then naturally tend to assign idiosyncratic credit (IC) to a person that holds loyalty to the group norms and aspires for the well-being of the group (Hollander, 1978, 1992, 2012). If the sense-of-unity is with a political party, the leader that forms the inclusive identity around the political party gets selected by voters whose wellbeing tries to improve. According to Sadhguru, the greater the measure of unity, the better. When it comes to the SDGs, the measure of unity should become the whole planet, whole existence. In Sadhguru's conception, the whole sensory body of the person should encompass all life on the planet as part of the self for the attainment of SDGs.

Third, Kegan (1994) states that leadership of self-transforming adults adopts "an order of consciousness that is able to subordinate or relativize systemic knowing" (Kegan, 1994, p. 316), and "move systemic knowing from subject to object" (Kegan, 1994, p. 317). Sadhguru instead talks about getting into touch with the ultimate intelligence that magically organizes all life. This intelligence is the ultimate way of knowing in Sadhguru's sense. However, also in Sadhguru's sense this intelligence remains the subject, unseen, hidden, unobservable directly to the self. Sadhguru holds a sense of unity with all existence, and frequently gets in touch with ultimate intelligence as way of knowing. When in touch with this intelligence, a leader can attain in-spirited ideas to conduct moral leadership action (Steiner, 1999/1893). Sadhguru's approach to leadership confirms his transformative (almost magical) impact on diverse groups of people that got activated to form the social movements, i.e., Planting Trees, Rally for Rivers, Truth, and Youth. Here, the other case studies of leadership of Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King showcase the transformative powers of inspirited leaders other than Sadhguru (Morselli & Passini, 2010). In an organization science narrative, Sadhguru's inclusive identity could be replaced by the concept of collective awareness as the key to the revitalization and re-enlightenment of the post-modern society (Hoffman, Jennings, 2018).

5. What should be new assumptions and design principles for LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS that aim to produce leaders capable of meeting SDGs?

Here we inquire into the change of assumptions on which leadership development programs that aim to develop leaders for the SDGs should be designed on. First, we outline the change in the assumption space on which leadership development programs are to be designed; then we outline the core design principles and goals of leadership development programs. Some of the changes in the assumptions are implied directly from the analysis of Sadhguru; while others are implied indirectly by reflecting upon how Sadhguru has been developed into a leader for the SDGs. We ask how the programs should be designed if we want to systemically produce more of the "Sadhguru" type of leaders.

Old assumption. Skills and competence that need to be developed can be predicted

New assumption. In transformational environments the only skills required, that could be also be predicted, are the artistry of self and social transformation

Leadership development programs should acknowledge that the only predictability of the future is the "unpredictability" that stems from the restructuring of major social arrangements in the global environment, including: the social arena (i.e., the greying of the workplace, generation Y/Z, empowered workforce, self-led, leaderless, rise of soft-skilled workers, skill specialisation, the need for a strong culture, the psychology of work), the technological (i.e., bio-machinery, smarter robots, the internet of things, information overload and big data, disruptive technology, distributed manufacturing), the economic (i.e., VUCA, changing business lifecycles, the social impact of business, the rise of collaboration, prosumers, changes in the reward structure, the need for anticipation, entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs), the environmental (i.e., environmental movement, reclaiming the environment, environmental crisis), and the political (i.e., corporate social responsibility, the post-capitalist society, value pluralism) (Suderman, Foster, 2015).

In the face of such a transformation of the leadership landscape, there is a need to educate future leaders around novelty, innovation, intuition, and sense-making (Burn, Houston, 2015). As such, Burn and Houston suggests that leaders need to function as social

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[16] Sadhguru: Leadership Ambition to Vision, Sadhguru speaks at the IMD Laussane. Accessed on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGroxC5xJaA.

artists and that leadership programs should be designed around four domains: (1) sensory-motor, (2) psychological-historic, (3) mythical-symbolic, and (4) integrative unitive. In the first domain, leaders need to acquire the capacity for "somatic knowing" to discern what feels right; in the second domain one learns to reflect upon the self-schema (the story one constructs around the self and where one tends to suppress and silence the self); and liberate oneself from unconscious, habitual ways of reacting. In the third domain, leaders learn how to use the mythical and symbolic language through which "leaders articulate and interpret the cultural narratives in ways that inspire people to act, which directly impact organizational and community dynamics, on both local and global levels" (Burn, Houston, 2015, p. 232). In the fourth domain, one needs to learn the properties of the complexity of leadership, which is based on understanding the organizations and social collectives as the self-organizing systems.

Old assumption.   Horizontal adult development and informational learning

New assumption.   Vertical adult development and transformational learning

Leadership development is currently not sufficiently designed around the notion that leader development unfolds in the context of adult development; thus not sufficiently acknowledging the regularities of adult development (Day et al., 2014; McCauley et al., 2006); and dismissing the notion that the stage on which a person is operating from substantially defines their self-referential system and meaning-making capacities (Kegan, 1982, 1994). Personality (Vincent, 2014) and leadership styles are largely dependent upon the order of consciousness (McCauley et al., 2006). To make this transition to vertical development, we need to understand the difference between informational and transformational learning. Currently, leadership programs are designed around informational learning, which is aimed "at increasing our fund of knowledge, at increasing our repertoire of skills, at extending already established cognitive structures … " Kegan, 2009, p. 42). In addition to informational learning, leadership development programs should also be designed around the principles of transformational learning. Leadership programs should aim to develop two cognitive capacities: (1) the capacity to shape "a coherent meaning out of the raw material of our outer and inner experiencing … our perceiving is simultaneously an act of conceiving, of interpreting" (Kegan, 2009, p. 44); underneath lies, informational learning; and (2) capacity to reform the meaning-making; underneath lies transformational learning. Reforming the meaning-making is a meta-process that unfolds in the inner landscape.

Old assumption.   Concept-based, knowledge transference program orientation

New assumption.   Experience-based, action-oriented program orientation

Third, both academics and management practitioners criticize management and leadership for their lack of relevance to practitioners, since they are not designed around students' real-life business challenges and problems. Thus, to gain relevance, leadership development programs should be organized around the principles of design thinking, with the minimum level aim to broaden the perspective-taking on problem definition and an action-oriented approach to solution searching among participants lacking relevant work experience (Dunne, Martin, 2006). However, for leaders with sufficient work experience, the program design should acknowledge that "Everything that every effective manager does is sandwiched between action on the ground and reflection in the abstract. Every manager has to find a way to combine these two mindsets – to function at the point where reflective thinking meets practical doing" (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003, p. 56), and that the principles he/she practices of managing to revolve around the five perspectives: (1) managing the self by reflective mindset; (2) managing organizations by the analytic mindset; (3) managing context by the worldly mindset; (4) managing relationships by the collaborative mindset; and (5) managing change by the action mind-set. As a result, Gosling and Mintzberg (2003) suggest that leadership development programs be structured into five modules, whereby each of the modules aims to develop one aspect of the mind-set. Furthermore, leadership development programs should serve as a holding environment for identity restructuring (Snook et al., 2010), thus incorporating into leadership design such potentially dis-equilibrating experiences that are personality salient, interpersonal in nature, and emotionally engaging (Manners & Durkin, 2000). At the same time, sufficient support in terms of coaching during the process of transition from lower to higher orders of consciousness must be put in the program design (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Old assumption.   Development of critical thinking and informed judgment

New assumption.   Development of character and self-aware through

Cloninger (2004) redefined the personality as the dynamic organization within the individual of the psychobiological systems through which the person both shapes and adapts uniquely to an ever-changing internal and external environment (Cloninger, 2004). Personality is a three-layer construct of: (1) temperament (Cloninger, 1986), which is heritable and stable; deterministic, where pre-logic, is subjectively linked with basic emotions and is not rational or self-aware; (2) character (Cloninger et al., 1994), which is an outcome of higher cognitive processes that modulate conflicts, are contingently logical, hierarchical, algorithmic (predictable), subjectively linked with secondary emotions, rational, not self-aware; and (3) self-aware though (Cloninger, 2004), which quantifies levels of coherence and well-being experienced in one's life, which is intuitive, holographic (parts elicit wholes), creative (original, not algorithmic), rational, and self-aware. The aim of a leadership development program should be the development of character and self-awareness though, thus the measurement of the program effectiveness could also be accomplished by measuring character development with the application of the Cloninger's TCI inventory (Cloninger et al., 1994), and a 360-competency assessment as an indicator of progress (Anderson, 2006, 2016).

Old assumption.   Authority-based, leader-centric view on leader and leadership

New assumption.   Trust-based, distributed approach view on leader and leadership

Heifetz (2015) proposes the need to distinguish leadership from both formal and informal authority to clarify the relationship between leadership fuelled by a formal authority relative to leadership fuelled by an informal authority. Heifetz proposes that leadership from an authoritative position is constrained, and participants need to better understand these constraints to overcome them. Specifically, authority is defined as a "relationship in which one party entrusts power to another in exchange for service. The power entrusted for service" (Heifetz, 2015: xi). Both formal and informal leadership roles are made by authorization. Better understanding how authorization empowers leadership is also required to "investigate the virtue and value of authority structures in our lives, and at the same time the ways authorities became untrustworthy" (Heifetz, 2015: xi). Removing the trust of the follower towards authority requires that leadership development programs aim to: (1) prepare and train authorities to be trustworthy; and at the same time (2) address the fact that followers can be also distrustful towards authority. The critical development challenge of advanced leadership development programs should be to develop skills to repair the historic distrust of their people by learning how to acknowledge historic injustice, collective pain, and trauma, and "how to be on the receiving end of historic anger with grace" (Heifetz, 2015: xii). This is most likely the toughest developmental goal of all.

Old assumption.   Leadership development programs at venues

New assumption.   Leadership development programs with a blended design or in an online environment

Leadership development programs have been designed on a premise to create a set of challenging experiences that put participants out of their comfort zone (Chaiklin, 2003). In this zone, a program should provide support, holding the environment for the participants to acquire new insights, lessons, and to transition to new identities (Ibarra et al., 2010; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic required swift transition of all leadership development programs in the online environment in a hurry (Dill et al., 2020). That was a natural challenge for both, learners, but also educators; thus no need for creating superficial challenges. The reflection on that adaptation alone would provide a valuable learning opportunity for all.

The online environment carries specific advantages and disadvantages for leadership development (Jenkins, 2016). If leadership aims to develop leaders for the SDGs, COVID-19 induced online leadership programs' additional learning advantage. They make a real-time comparison between leaders more acceptable. For instance, comparing leadership approached across different types of political and other leaders on, how they respond to the same threat, (the COVID-19) provides valuable insight into how leaders who operate from different orders of consciousness tend to interpret and respond to the same threat. If the programs last longer, the effects of their actions can be also monitored and discussed over time, and discussed from the perspective of the SDGs.

6. Conclusion

We conclude that the highest order leaders are more likely to produce the effects specified by the SDGs. They tend to operate from the expanded sensory body (feeling of exuberance) and sense of inclusive identity (being one with many). In such a state, they tend to perceive leadership challenges slightly differently than leaders that operate from lower orders of consciousness. Their perceptions of leadership challenges are much more concerned with the wellbeing for many, including nature, the options considered to resolve such challenges are judged through the criteria of "wellbeing for many". They tend to initiate some social movements and by some strange causality, they affect specified by SDGs. Sadhguru likes to imply that normal causality does not apply to the kind of leadership he is propagating. "There are a lot of textbook scientists who will immediately say "Oh, he is spreading pseudoscience." Well, their idea of science is rudimentary. Real scientists will never say such things because they know what they have explored is a tiny speck; what is unexplored is limitless."[17] However, scientific support to Sadhguru's ideas can be found in the large repository of the Heart Math Institute.[18] Their findings confirm that consciousness, spirituality, and high-quality leadership decision-making and impact are closely related categories.

The aspiration of leadership programs to produce Sadhguru's type of leaders require change in the assumption on which these programs are designed. The movement should be:

- From "skills and competence that need to be developed can be predicted" to "in transformational environments the only skills required, that could be also be predicted, are the artistry of self and social transformation";
- From "horizontal adult development and informational learning" to "vertical adult development and transformational learning";
- From "concept-based, knowledge transference program orientation" to "experience-based, action-oriented program orientation";
- From "development of critical thinking and informed judgment" to "development of character and self-aware through";
- From "authority-based, leader-centric view on leader and leadership" to "trust-based, distributed approach view on leader and leadership";
- From "leadership development programs at venues" to "leadership development programs with a blended design or in an online environment".

These are huge changes in the leadership program design, so implementing at least some of them would create programs that would

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[17] With Sadhguru in Challenging Times - 04 Apr 6:00 p.m. IST. Accessed on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLXLKl2ajc0.
[18] Hearth Math Organization. https://www.heartmath.org/.

more likely produce leaders capable of attaining SDGs.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Melita Balas Rant: Funding acquisition, hereby confirm that I am the single contributor to the paper. All work is original, never submitted elsewhere. For this research no grant from funding agency has been given.

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